

The Ballarat Naturalist

April 2015



President's Report to the Annual General Meeting

6th March 2015

I am pleased to present the President's report for the 2014/2015 year. of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.

Our club has enjoyed another interesting year of meetings, excursions and other activities. Meeting speakers were as listed in the syllabus. There were a couple of minor changes to the excursions with the November excursion led by John Gregurke to the Clunes area rather than Mount Beckworth and the March excursion cancelled due to the SEANA camp in Ballarat being the next week. Unfortunately we experienced computer problems at the February meeting so the members who were scheduled were unable to make their presentations. Hopefully some of the content will be seen later.

As usual, the club held a monthly meeting with a speaker on the first Friday of the month except January, followed by an excursion, usually on the Sunday following the meeting. General meeting attendance continued to be in the mid twenties. Meetings were held at the S.M.B. Industry Training Centre, corner of Gillies and Gregory Streets, Wendouree.

Many members attended the South East Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) autumn gathering at Marysville hosted by the Upper Goulburn club, with a smaller number going to the spring camp at Portland. Nine members also attended the Australian Naturalists Association (ANN) get-together in Hobart during October. So despite there not being a club camp, members certainly investigated the natural environment beyond the local area. All these activities were superbly organised with local people sharing their extensive knowledge by conducting memorable excursions supported by interesting evening activities.

We are taking on the challenge of hosting the 2015 SEANA autumn camp and this has consumed the thoughts of the committee for a few

Spring SEANA Camp

Where?	Donald
When?	25-27 September, 2015
Accommodation?	Search the Internet for bookings in Donald or nearby towns

meetings and I thank John Gregurke in particular for taking leadership in the organisation for this but also thank in advance all those who will be involved in contributing to the event.

On behalf of our club John Petheram developed an application for funding to work on the La Gerche trail at Creswick. The application was successful and provided a grant of \$8760.40. John put a lot of work into the application and continues to lead the effort to progress the project which will be a significant practical activity for our club and markedly update current signage.

I am again appreciative of the efforts of everybody who has helped in countless ways in the smooth running of the club, especially all committee members. I am particularly appreciative of the work done by Emily Noble who has enthusiastically and capably taken on the role of secretary, comprehensively recording the activities of our club and keeping us well informed of relevant environment issues and activities. Her knowledge of orchids on her property is remarkable. Her knowledge of orchids on her property and willingness to share this has provided inspiration as well as considerable interest and enjoyment.

Thanks to those who have led excursions, and written about them and the reports of our meeting-speakers. Observations reported at meetings continue to add interest and allow members to contribute. It is good to see members keeping an eye on the environment and a special acknowledgment to John and Emily for keeping us up to date with environmental matters needing attention and often representing the club. Les Hanrahan again efficiently kept track of finances, always there with treasurer's reports and accurate advice and Fran Hanrahan has again capably done the newsletter which keeps us informed as well as providing a record of our activities. Thank you to Fran for agreeing to again do this.

I wish the club well with next year's activities.

Peter Dalman

Presentation at AGM: Members' images of flowers



Val Hocking chose a few local photos of flowers from Emily's property and Enfield forest including the Flying Duck Orchid *caleana major* and the Tongue Orchid *cryptostylis subulata*- which relies on a wasp to pollinate. She also added photos of the abundant colourful flora seen on Mt Wellington in the wet, on our recent ANN Hobart trip. The berries of

Photo: Flying bird orchid *caleana major*

Berry *leptocophylla juniperina* and the Spreading Cheeseberry *cyanthodes straminea* were particularly spectacular.

Report from Claire and Peter Dalman-

Flowers of the Kimberley

Claire spoke about flowering plants that could be seen along the Gibb River Road and adjacent areas in the Kimberley region of NW of Western Australia as seen on



Photo: Kimberley Rose, *Brachychiton viscidulus*

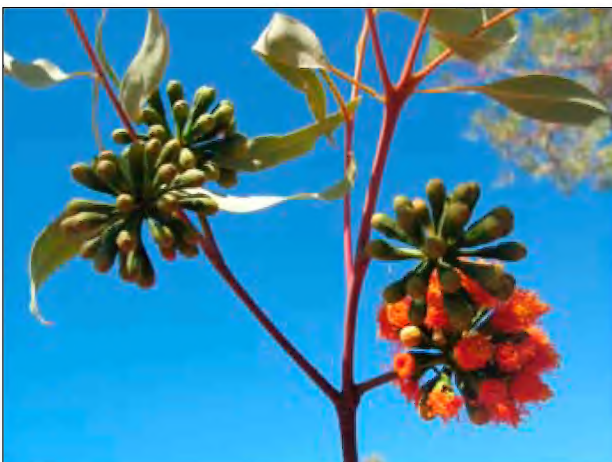


Photo: Woollybut, *Eucalyptus miniata* buds and flowers

their 2014 trip. Starting with a picture of the Pentecost river crossing and finishing with a sunset on the Cockburn ranges Claire talked about the flowers, their location, naming and aboriginal uses.

One highlight was the exten-

sive areas of Pindan Wattle *Acacia tumida* with masses of pendulous yellow flowers which gave its name to the area in a similar way to which we refer to Mallee country. There was also the striking red flowers of the Kimberley Rose *Brachychiton viscidulus*, interesting Screw Palm *Pandanus spiralis*, yellow Kapok Flowers *Cochlospermum fraseri*, beautiful Woollybut *Eucalyptus miniata* with its orange flowers, the striking *Grevillea wickhamii* and Native Cotton Flower *Gossypium australe* which is related to Sturts Desert Rose.

John Gregurke showed slides of plants flowering at Anglesea during February and included the seed cases of some species. Plants shown were Cushion Bush, Hop Goodenia, White Correa, Moonah, Wirilda, Messmate and Rosy Hyacinth-Orchid.



Photo: Rainier Beargrass

Carol Hall’s images were taken in Olympic NP in the Pacific NW of USA. These included **Beargrass** a 2m tall plant whose leaves were used for weaving. **Avalanche Lily** carpets the meadows, emerging as the snow melts. **Pasqueflower**, also known as Western Anemone and Windflower, blooms around Easter. Fine silky hairs grow beneath

Subscriptions are now due

Should you wish to pay your membership at a bank or on line, our bank details are :

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc., Bendigo Bank, **BSB 633 108**
 Account no. 1191 12290 ***Please remember to add your name***

<i>Ordinary member</i>	<i>\$35</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>\$55</i>
<i>Distant member</i>	<i>\$15</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>\$15</i>
<i>Newsletter postage (Ordinary member)</i>			<i>\$10(new)</i>



SEANA Camp Fri. 13 – Sun. 15 Mar. 2015

Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat hosted the South East Australian Naturalists Association autumn camp at Pax Hill Scout Camp.



Photo: SEANA group at the Wombat Forest Excursion - led by Gayle Osborne (and other members of Wombat Forest Care) looking at some herbaceous species in a moist sedge dominated area under Yarra Gum and other Eucalypts.

About 100 people registered for the camp with approximately seventy guests from 13 Field Naturalists' Clubs from around Victoria. Visitors came from Portland, Warrnambool, Timboon, Geelong, Castlemaine, Bendigo, Broken Creek, Alexandra, Melbourne, Ringwood, Latrobe Valley and Sale. With our own members over 80 people were present for dinner on Friday and Saturday evenings. Thanks to all the members that helped in so many ways to put on a great weekend for our visitors.

Naturalists went on excursions, lead by local guides, to observe the plants, trees, birds, ants, geology and history of bushland areas around Ballarat



At Lake Burrumbeet visitors watched several

Photo SEANA Field Nats near Lake Burrumbeet



Photo: Red River Gum Lake Burrumbeet

hundred pelicans feeding close to the southern shore. One thousand pelicans were seen on the lake. We admired the majestic old Red Gums. While walking through the Junipers Road Bushland Reserve near Haddon we inspected the types of eucalypts and wattles growing in the area. Common Heath was flowering. Even in autumn a few other flowers were seen – Narrow-leaf Bitterpea and a bluebell. Hyacinth Orchid had finished flowering, with the large seed pods hanging on the stalks. Scarlet Robins, White-browed Treecreeper and Grey Fantails were seen.

During a bird walk around Lake Wendouree the visitors were delighted to see 38 species of birds including Musk Duck, Blue-billed Duck and Great Crested, Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebe.

Another bird-watching group visited sites in the Creswick area where we usually find a variety of small migratory birds. As is often the case, several species expected to be seen were not sighted, presumably having departed on their long return-flight north. Tawny Frogmouths with young had been sighted a few days before our excursion but these had also moved. We did see a Wedge-tailed Eagle, a variety of water birds, Rosellas and a Rufous Fantail

One excursion looked at the types of ants in urban parks.

Other excursions to Creswick, Scarsdale, Wombat Forest, Mt Buninyong and Macarthur Park showed visitors the diversity of habitat in the Ballarat area.

On Friday night after-dinner speakers, Emily Noble from Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat showed a range of trees, orchids, birds, ants and flies found in the area. On Saturday night, Martin Scuffins spoke on the care of injured birds of prey. Martin brought in a Barn



Owl to illustrate his comments about raptors, thrilling the audience as the bird enjoyed being fed

Roger Thomas led an excursion around Macarthur Park and Paul's Wetland with the group sighting 24 species of birds at Macarthur Park and 14 at Paul's Wetland.

The buried rivers of gold around Creswick made for an interesting circuit with participants travelling through the impressive Kingston avenue of honour, past former mine sites and through volcanic plains, visiting the historic Monier bridge built by Sir John Monash at Lawrence and finishing at the Australasian Number 2 mine, the



Photo: SEANA Field Naturalists at Winters Swamp

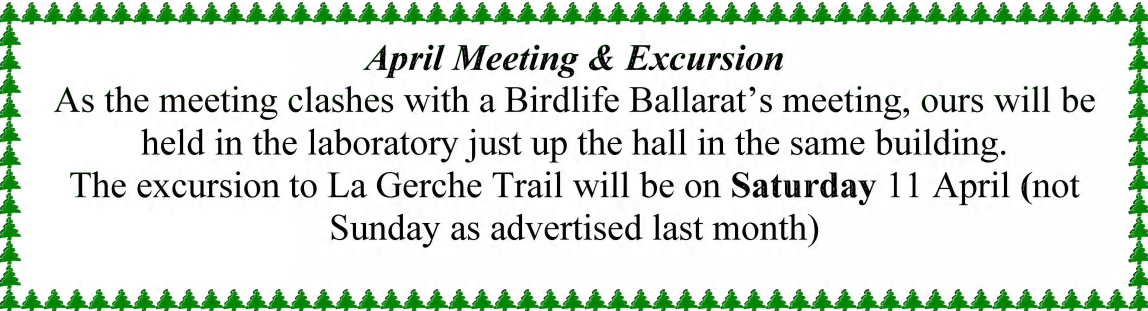
site of Australia's worst gold mining disaster.

Visitors had the opportunity to visit the Ballarat botanic gardens to see the spectacular begonias and marvel at the great trees planted by our pioneers which included the enormous blue gum along the Gilles Street boundary.

Twenty-six field nats headed out to a 40-acre bush property of club members at Scarsdale and enjoyed the resident birdlife on the wetland, a pair of Tawny Frogmouths, the local Enfield Grevillea, *Grevillea bedgoodiana*, and colonies of three incredibly small native orchids: Tiny Greenhoods, Parsons Bands and Bearded Midge orchids in the Heathy Dry Woodland.

Gayle Osborne of the community group 'Wombat Forestcare' lead an excursion through some unusual forest types in the headwaters of the Werribee River. Special features were areas of Sedgy Riparian Woodland and then a hillslope of Heathy Dry Forest. Yarra Gums were common across both areas, which tend to have large hollows, and we were entertained by a group of Gang Gangs at one stage. We lunched near Magee's Creek close to the Werribee River, in an area that was once reserved for water storage. Wombat Forestcare is currently objecting to a mining proposal that will destroy a significant area of this part of Wombat Forest.

In the afternoon we visited one of five research sites of a long-term study established in 1984 in the Wombat Forest. The research aims to quantify the effects of spring versus autumn burning and fire frequency on flora, fauna, invertebrates, tree growth, soil fertility and fuel levels. We were led by Dr Kevin Tolhurst of the University of Melbourne's Creswick Campus, whose knowledge of fire ecology was an inspiration to us all, and highlighted the importance of research in this area. One plot visited had not been burned for over 70 years, while others have been burned seven times in the past 30 years. The results are vital for our understanding of fire management, yet continued funding for long-term research is under constant threat.



April Meeting & Excursion

As the meeting clashes with a Birdlife Ballarat's meeting, ours will be held in the laboratory just up the hall in the same building.

The excursion to La Gerche Trail will be on **Saturday** 11 April (not Sunday as advertised last month)

On Sunday morning twenty-three SEANA members visited the La Gerche Trail at Creswick, which commemorates the life of John La Gerche who worked with other forest bailiffs to control the rampant clearing of the Ballarat-Creswick Forest for mining and other uses. La Gerche also established a plant nursery at Sawpit Gully, and trials of tree species for regeneration of mined areas. This now has Victorian Heritage Status. The trail is a 2.2 km circuit under towering specimens of 120 year-old pines, oaks and other exotic and some native species.

The Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat is involved with Parks Victoria in a project to re-sign the La Gerche Track, which will be completed in 2015.



Also on Sunday a small group motored around Ballarat visiting the National Trust trees in the various parks and Gardens surrounding the central part of Ballarat.

Most of the trees were exotic had been planted in the nineteenth century with a number of them 153 years old.

Photo: Two trees, at BSC Barkly St., planted 1901 by Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York and registered by National Trust. Vic.

Reports and photos contributed by various club members

Note from Peter Dalman



The photo on the front of March Newsletter shows Thurgoods at the marker at Cameron Corner, the point where NSW, SA and Queensland meet. The dingo fence can be seen in the background. Driving is interesting because to get to Queensland from NSW you go into SA where the GPS changes to SA time then a couple of hundred metres into Queensland where the time changes again.

Excerpts of FNCB Meeting Minutes March 6, 2015

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: Club President Peter Dalman welcomed 25 members, including new members, Bill and Kathy Elder.

Apologies: E&D Thurgood P Noble, J Morrish, A Riddell, H Burgess, J Petheram, J&M Cuttle and D Menon.

Business Arising from Previous Meeting:

Email to BREAZE: nominating May 23 for the Club to have a free stall at the Smart Living Market at Lake Wendouree.

Correspondence: IN:.

From Trust for Nature: Long Swamp wetland update, including the status of the purchase negotiations and reporting the discovery of two Wedge-tailed Eagles' nests in the River Red Gums at the site; update on positive results of their work at Ned's Corner Station.

From Aggie Stevenson, Glenelg Hopkins CMA: Information about a new project beginning in the Victorian Volcanic Plains Bioregion (in the Glenelg Hopkins and Corangamite CMA's) called "Bring Back the Banksias and Save the Sheokes"; Invitation to a workshop on the project on Tuesday 31st March at Lake Bolac Boat Shed for those with information about current or past distribution of *Allocasuarina verticillata*, *Banksia marginata* and *Bursaria spinosa*.

From Singarayer Florentine, Federation University Australia: Invitation to the "Biodiversity across the Borders - Biodiversity in Rural Landscapes" Conference, June 12, 2015 at Mt Helen Campus.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

Submission from the Club regarding Victoria's Bushfire Fuel Management Approach: John G. and Emily N. to work on a submission. Bill M. supported a letter opposing the hectare-based target, citing the damage he has observed that planned burns have caused in Enfield State Park/ Forest and Bushranger Reserve, promoting the proliferation of species like Bitter Pea and the demise of species such as *Correa reflexa* and prostrate wattles like *Acacia aculeatissima* and *A. genistifolia*.

Reports:

La Gerche Trail project: Val H. reported that three Club members

met with 2 staff from Parks Victoria on March 2nd, 2015, to discuss signage for the La Gerche Trail. Parks Vic have enough funds to cover the cost of the two largest signs, one in the carpark and one at the start of the Trail near the Stables, as well as directional signage. FNCB planning includes about 40 interpretative signs of two different sizes around the Trail, with feedback on sign content to be sought at the Club's working bee at the Trail on April 11th, 2015.

General Business

Newsletter discussion. Are there any sections that are not required?

Show and Tell

Dulcie B. found Rainbow Lorikeets attracted to a flowering gum tree in Wendouree.

Ken H. described the grace of Pelicans soaring over Wendouree Bowls Club, Gregory St, and frequent sightings of Musk Lorikeets around Wendouree.

Wayne McG. reported two sightings of White Needletails at Mt Buninyong, along with a Wedge-tailed Eagle. He also saw large numbers of Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers at Lake Burrumbeet.

Claire D. noted that a New Holland Honeyeater appeared to have a preference for red flowers, including lilies, in her garden at Miners Rest.

John G. told us that Fon Ryan of the APS had observed about 150 Pelicans on Lake Learmonth after 28mm of rain formed a large, shallow pool of water in the dry lake bed. They were gone the next day because there were no fish to feed on.

Carol H. observed more than 1000 Pelicans at Lake Burrumbeet early in March.

Excepts from Minutes of 62nd AGM Mar 6, 2015

All last year's Committee members were nominated unopposed, with all Club Members present voting in favour of their re-election to the Committee.

General Business:

2015-16 membership fees: remain at 2014 levels except for newsletter postage increase to \$10 because cost of stamps is set to rise significantly.

CALENDAR 2015-16

April

- Fri 10** *Wildflowers of WA* - Neil Macumber
- Sat 11** *Excursion to La Gerche Trail* - John Petheran
- Mid-month excursion TBA
- No April committee meeting

May

- Fri 1** *Mongolia* - Val Hocking & *Cape York* - John Gregurke
- Sun 3** *Mt Cole* - John Gregurke
- Tues 26** Committee at Val's

Committee

President	Peter Dalman
Vice –Pres	Fran Hanrahan
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman
John Gregurke
Wayne McGuire

Val Hocking
John Mildren

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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